

## won't you come on home, i built us a flying machine by jibberjabber599

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**Summary:**

He doesn't think he's heartbroken. He misses Eleven more than he can put into words, but his mom is right that he's happy Will is back. Sometimes it's hard for his brain to wrap itself around the conflicting emotions.

He'd gotten one of his best friends back but lost one he'd gained. It's a trade he wishes never had to be made.

## won't you come on home, i built us a flying machine

### Author's Note:

really debated writing this fic, because mike's twelve and i honestly didn't think i could write him well. also pretty hesitant to write first crush sort of deals, but this happened after rewatching the show. i love mike wheeler so much y'all.

"I think Mike is heartbroken," he hears his mom state in hushed tones in the kitchen a couple of nights after *the* night when he keeps tossing and turning in his bed and decides to get a snack.

He'd considered knocking on Nancy's door to see if she was awake too, but knew she might ask questions that he didn't feel like answering, which meant the kitchen was his best option. He hadn't counted on his parents being up late on a weeknight, and now he wants nothing more than to bolt back upstairs.

"He's *twelve*," his dad replies, sounds a tad bit mocking, had that tone he usually had when he thought his mom was being ridiculous. "He's not heartbroken over a *girl*. Besides, did you see how happy he was that Will was back?"

"Of course he's happy Will is back. Will's one of his best friends, Ted," his mom is clearly upset now, like those times she accused his dad of not really listening to what she was saying. "That wasn't my point."

His bed is looking better and better by the second, but his stomach growls suddenly and he's stuck trying to decide what to do at the bottom of the stairs. His mom storms out of the kitchen at that

moment, his dad behind her, and their eyes widen when they see him. It's his mom who speaks first. "Michael, why are you up?"

She rushes over and pulls him into a hug, one that he doesn't resist.

They both act like they haven't been talking about him, and his dad announces he's going up to bed as his mom pours him a small glass of milk. He pretends he doesn't notice her throwing concerned glances at him as he nibbles on a cookie and sips his milk in silence.

"Mom, I'm okay," he tells her when she tucks him into bed like she used to when he was Holly's age. It should feel a little silly, but it's comforting when she smooths his hair back and tucks the blanket around him.

She doesn't argue with him, and doesn't ask him to talk to her like he expects. "You need to sleep," she says softly, not moving from her spot perched on the edge of his bed. "Want me to sing you a lullaby?"

"Mom," he whines, grinning despite himself, and for one moment everything feels normal again.

The only time he'd heard the term "heartbroken" was in reference to all the gross romance movies Nancy had watched since he was old enough to remember.

He doesn't think he's heartbroken. He misses Eleven more than he can put into words, but his mom is right that he's happy Will is back. Sometimes it's hard for his brain to wrap itself around the conflicting emotions.

He'd gotten one of his best friends back but lost one he'd gained. It's a trade he wishes never had to be made.

The group doesn't discuss El often after a couple of weeks pass, but even Lucas and Dustin are sad when they do talk about her. There's a part of him that wants to be selfish and mean and accuse them of not missing her half as much as he does, but he knows it's unfair and wrong when he remembers how they'd both cared for her, too.

It's Will, when he's discharged from the hospital, who proposes the idea.

"We should have a goodbye ceremony for her," Will suggests, looking at all of them for confirmation.

"What? Like a *funeral*," Dustin squeaks, wincing when Lucas elbows him in the side.

They end up doing it the next day, in Will's backyard. He brings Eggo's (which strikes him as something that would be incredibly hilarious to bring in someone's honor before last month) and blinks back tears as Dustin and Lucas argue over who should speak first.

"Oh, fine! I'll go first," Dustin grumbles, clearing his throat as he gazes up at the sky. "Okay, so. Eleven, you were the only person I've ever met who could move things with her mind. And even if I thought you were crazy at first, you were really cool. I'm sorry you didn't get to try chocolate pudding, a—"

"What he's *trying* to say," Lucas interrupts, ignoring Dustin's glare, "is that." Lucas pauses, taking a deep breath before continuing, "We'll really miss you, Eleven."

"Thanks for saving my life, El," is all he says, even if he's thinking of a million other things he'd say if she were here again.

None of them expect Will to say anything even if it was his idea, but he does. "I think we would have liked each other, Eleven," Will smiles, and they all nod in agreement.

Tears spill over later as his legs furiously peddle home, and without thinking he goes straight to the basement. He can hear his mom calling from upstairs that dinner is ready.

His eyes feel puffy and sore and he can't breathe through his stuffy nose when someone finally comes down the stairs. He expects to hear his mom yell his name again, but the person slides down to the floor next to him, knee knocking gently into his.

"I'm not going to tell you everything's going to be alright," Nancy says as she wraps an arm around him. "But you're not alone, Mike."

She wipes his face with the corner of the blanket El had used, mumbling, “Gross,” and wrinkling her nose in a way that makes him breathe out a laugh. She grins, telling him he’s better off rinsing his face with some cold water. “And use a cold compress. It might help the swelling and redness,” she advises, smoothing her wrinkled skirt as she stands up. “I’ll tell Mom you’re not hungry right now.”

When he looks into the mirror above the sink, he thinks, maybe this is what heartbroken feels like.

Nancy drags him down into the basement a few days later, the blanket clutched in her hands.

“What are you doing with that?” he asks when they make their way down the steps.

“Well, I washed it,” she walks over to where the blanket had hidden Eleven, kneeling to the ground. “Is this *really* where she hid?”

He kneels down next to her. “Yeah.”

“I’m going to remake it then,” she looks at him then, like she’s inviting him to help, and he does. “There we go. It’s back to how it was,” she announces when they’re finished, a faint smile on her face.

“Why’d you do this? S-she’s not coming back,” his voice cracks with emotion.

“Two weeks ago, I didn’t believe in monsters or other worlds,” Nancy explains, squeezing his shoulder. “Or girls who can move things with her mind. But now, I do. I think...we’re allowed to hope for a miracle.”

He imagines how the Snow Ball would have gone if El had still been here.

He would have convinced the rest of the group to go with them, and Lucas would have rolled his eyes as Dustin agreed to go for the free food. They would have teased Will about asking Jennifer Hayes to the dance (“She *cried* at your funeral!”), but ultimately decided the five of them would go as friends (Lucas would have given him one of those looks and scoffed, “Yeah, right.”)

Jonathan would have driven Will over so they all could get ready together, and he would have been their ride to the dance so they could avoid any of their parents taking them. Nancy would have helped El get ready, locking her door and not allowing anyone to see until she was finished.

Nancy would order them to wait downstairs and present Eleven at the top of the stairs with a proud grin.

She'd have worn the wig to avoid anyone gawking at her, a pretty dress, and a nervous smile.

His mom would want pictures, asking Jonathan to do the honors as she directed them all into various poses. Jonathan would only be told to stop after at least a dozen were snapped, but Mike would hear a *click* as he reached down to squeeze El's hand and whisper nervously that she looked really pretty. Jonathan would sheepishly apologize, giving Nancy the camera and a smile before heading out to his car to wait for them.

He would share a look with Nancy, because they'd both know that would end up being the picture his mom cherished the most.

Jonathan would drop them off, promising to be back in an hour. They'd all walk in nervously, but El would stand in awe over the corny decorations as Dustin would immediately stalk over to the refreshment table, Lucas and Will following him.

He would have had his first dance that night, not knowing where to put his hands, stepping on El's toes clumsily. She'd wince but smile in assurance when he'd apologize, and they'd awkwardly sway to the rhythm.

It would have been perfect.



Nancy's door is cracked when he passes by it on Christmas Eve, and he knows he'll likely be yelled at to go to his own room, but pushes it open anyway.

She's sitting on her bed while writing in her diary, but looks up when he walks through the doorway, placing her pen between the pages to mark her place before setting it down and patting the space beside her. A month ago, she would have pushed him out and shut the door in his face.

He tells her that as he sits down, and she laughs without humor. "A lot of things were different a month ago," she replies, and he's not sure he's ever heard her sound so sad.

"Do you think you ever stop," he pauses, swallowing the thickness in his throat, "you know, missing someone?"

Nancy doesn't answer immediately. "No," she finally says, so softly he almost doesn't catch it. "I know they're just words, but...I'm so sorry, Mike."

He sniffs, determined to not cry in front of his sister. "I really liked her," he admits. "She was my friend."

"I know," Nancy hugs him then, pulling him into her side. They stay that way for a few minutes, and when she pulls away she asks with faux-enthusiasm if he's ready for Santa's visit.

"I haven't believed in Santa since I was seven and you told me he didn't exist!" He still remembers how Nancy had been scolded that day.

"Oh, right. Sorry about that," she chuckles and bumps her shoulder into his, and he knows she isn't really that sorry at all. "Try not to ruin it for Holly when she gets older."

"And Mike," she calls when he's shutting her door, and he stops. "If you ever need me at night, like, if you have a nightmare? You can come talk to me."

He goes to sleep thinking it's awful that he'll tell lies to his little sister in years to come that Santa did exist but that monsters didn't.

The basement is a hard place to be now.

Before, it'd been a sanctuary of sorts for him. Now it serves as a reminder, even during the times the guys come over and he's distracted by a campaign.

But sometimes he'll find his gaze settling on the makeshift fort and wonders *when* he'll be able to tell El about how he'd helped Nancy fix it up.

"You don't have to stay down here anymore, of course," he'll explain to her. "It's just...we hoped you'd come back somehow."

Because like Nancy had told him that day, if monsters and the Upside Down existed, they were allowed to hope for a miracle—and he was waiting for one.